

U.S. Serial No. 10/667,545
Response to Office Action
Mailed November 16, 2004

Page 5 of 6

REMARKS

Applicants have reviewed the Office Action mailed November 16, 2004, along with the references cited and applied by the Examiner. In response, selected claims have been amended to address any objections, and define over any fair teaching associated with the art. Reconsideration of the application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

The drawings are objected to because of minor informalities. Applicants amended the drawings to cure the informalities and provide herewith a set of corrected drawing sheets. Accordingly, this objection should be withdrawn.

Claim 11 stands objected to because of various informalities. Applicants amended claim 11 to cure such informalities, and consequently this objection is now moot.

Claims 1-4, 6-9, 11-13, and 16-20 are deemed to be anticipated under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) by Stack – U.S. Patent No. 6,222,322. This rejection should be withdrawn for at least the following reason. Stack does not teach or suggest each and every element as recited in the subject claims.

Independent claim 1 (and similarly independent claims 11 and 17) has been amended herein to recite a lamp inverter starting circuit that receives a bus voltage signal that ranges up to 390V. The lamp inverter starting circuit includes an input portion that receives the bus voltage signal. A switching portion converts the bus voltage signal into an alternating current signal. A voltage controlled start-up portion delays triggering of the inverter starting circuit based on the bus voltage signal. Stack does not teach or suggest such claimed aspects.

In particular, Stack does not teach or suggest a lamp inverter starting circuit capable of receiving up to 390V, as recited in the subject claims. Instead, Stack discloses that "in the preferred embodiment, the standard line voltage is 120 or 230 VAC" (see col.3, lines 66-67). The Examiner contends, in the Office Action dated November 16, that although Stack is not capable of utilizing a bus voltage signal up to 390V, a protection circuit is employed to "monitor the lamp driving current...for a prevention of damage occurrences due to overheating or excessive current flow" (see col. 4, line 61 – col. 5, line 9). Thus, the Examiner concedes that voltages up to 390V are contrary to the operation of the circuit disclosed in Stack and

U.S. Serial No. 10/667,545
Response to Office Action
Mailed November 16, 2004

Page 6 of 6

therefore must be prevented. There is no teaching or even suggestion of utilizing the circuit disclosed in Stack with a bus voltage up to 390V.

Furthermore, Stack does not teach or suggest a voltage controlled start-up portion that delays triggering of the inverter starting circuit based on the input bus voltage, as recited in the subject claims. As disclosed in the subject invention, the input bus voltage is first introduced to a power factor correction circuit which is capable of accepting voltages from 169V to 390V, or more (see page 5, lines 10-19). Such disparate input voltages account for varying starting times of the rapid start electronic ballast incorporating the inverter starting circuit (see page 8, lines 20-28). In this manner, the starting time of the ballast is controlled by the bus voltage of the circuit (see page 9, lines 9-10). Stack does not teach or suggest that such variation of input voltages is related to a change in start times of an electronic ballast. Instead, Stack relies upon a filtered line voltage to determine the start time of the electronic ballast (see col. 6, lines 56-60). Such voltage is output from a ballast protection circuit which purposely limits the variation of the voltage employed (see col. 4, line 67 – col. 5, line 9).

Claims 5, 10 and 14-15 are rejected as being unpatentable under §103(a) by Stack. As noted above, Stack does not teach or suggest each and every element of independent claims 1 or 11 which claims 5, 10 and 14-15 depend therefrom. Accordingly, this rejection should be withdrawn.

For at least the above mentioned reasons, Stack does not teach or suggest the subject invention as recited in independent claims 1, 11 and 17 (and claims 2-10, 12-16 and 18-20 which depend therefrom). Accordingly, all formal and informal matters having been addressed, this application is in condition for allowance. Early notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date

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